

Thesis Statements

Now that you know your subject a little better, you can begin to develop your thesis statement. A thesis statement is the **main idea** of your paper: **one sentence**. It is the argument, angle or perspective you will need to support or prove with the facts that you gather in your research. The thesis statement must be included in the introduction to your research paper or project. A thesis informs the readers of the attention of the writer. It is the main discussion topic. It stands out indicating the point, around which the writer builds arguments, presents facts, and tries to prove a point.

"Writing a thesis statement is just like giving someone (your reader) good directions. When someone reads your paper, the directions (the controlling statement or the thesis statement) should be clear and up front. A reader shouldn't have to wander through your writing as you try to piece it together in your mind" (Searle, 2010). A "temporary" or working thesis helps you know what information to look for while doing your research. You can always **revise** your thesis later.

Brainstorming a thesis statement:

As you read, look for the following:

- Interesting contrasts or comparisons or patterns emerging in the information
- Is there something about the topic that surprises you?
- Do you encounter ideas that make you wonder why?
- Something an expert says makes you respond "No way! That can't be right!" or "Yes, absolutely. I agree"

Examples of brainstorming a thesis:

- Select a topic: *television violence and children*
- Ask an interesting question: *What are the effects of television violence on children?*
- Revise the question into a thesis: *Violence on television increases aggressive behavior in preschool children.*
- Remember, this argument is your "preliminary" or "working" thesis. As you read you may discover evidence that may affect your stance. It is OK to revise your thesis!

Here are some things to keep in mind when writing a thesis statement:

- It should use clear, strong language;
- The reader should know what your entire essay will be about by just reading your thesis statement
- Use specific language--NOT "some people say," "most people think," "experts believe," "usually," "sometimes," "at least," and "some of the time"
- It will never be a question, and it will always be a complete sentence
- It will mention the problem and your position

What does a thesis do?

For the writer, the working thesis statement:

- serves as a planning tool.
- helps the writer determine the paper's focus.
- becomes a reference point for all topic sentences in support of the argument.
- anticipates questions about the topic.

For the reader, the thesis statement:

- serves as a "map" to follow through the paper.
- keeps the reader focused on the argument
- engages the reader in the argument.
- offers enough detail for the reader to grasp the argument.

The following are examples of thesis statements:

- Alexander Hamilton was a great leader because he assured the financial security of the United States.
- George Washington was called the Father of our country because without him, the colonists would have lost.
- The Revolution and the new republic would have torn itself apart with political rivalries.
- Mark Twain's childhood experiences on the Mississippi River inspired him to write *Huckleberry Finn*.
- In fighting for the New Deal, Roosevelt showed the same characteristic he showed in fighting his disability--- determination.

Helpful Tips:

- Write your thesis statement on your topic sheet. Consult it at all times while you are creating your essay. This will help you stay focused.
- Remember that a thesis statement is *not* an indisputable fact (i.e. the earth is round) or a personal opinion (i.e. country music is horrible).

Activity Directions: Using your topic, fill in the questions asked to begin brainstorming for your thesis statement. A sample is done for you.

SAMPLES:

What's the topic you want to research?

WILLIAM WALLACE

What's your main opinion on this topic?

HE WAS A HERO TO SCOTLAND

What's the strongest argument supporting your opinion?

HE NEVER GAVE UP THE FIGHT

What's a second good argument that supports your opinion?

HE DIED AS A MARTYR

What's the main argument **against** your opinion?

HE COMMITTED VIOLENT ACTS

What's a possible title for your research project/essay?

WILLIAM WALLACE, MYTH OR MARTYR?

Possible thesis statement:

EVEN THOUGH HE COMMITTED VIOLENT ACTS, WILLIAM WALLACE WAS A HERO TO SCOTLAND BECAUSE HE DIED AS A MARTYR AND HE NEVER GAVE UP THE FIGHT.

Now it's your turn:

What's the topic you want to research?

What's your main opinion on this topic? (**Note:** use the topic somewhere in this opinion statement and maybe the word "should")

What's the strongest argument supporting your opinion?

What's a second good argument that supports your opinion?

What's the main argument **against** your opinion?

What's a possible title for your project/essay?

What is a possible thesis statement?